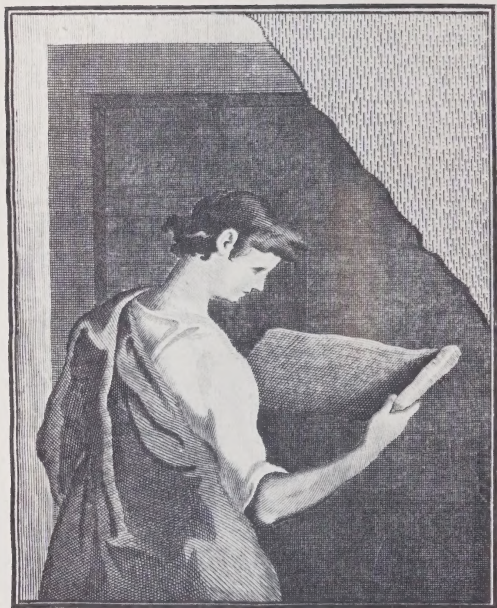
THE BATHS OF DIOCLETIAN
S. M. DEG ANGELI
MVSEO N.LE ROMANO

AVE
ROMA
IMMORTALIS

E TVTTO CHE AL MONDO
È CIVILE, GRANDE,
AVGVSTO, EGLI È ROMANO ANCORA
SALVE DEA ROMA
CHI DISCONOSCETI CERCHIATO HA
IL SENNO DI FREDDA TENEBRA

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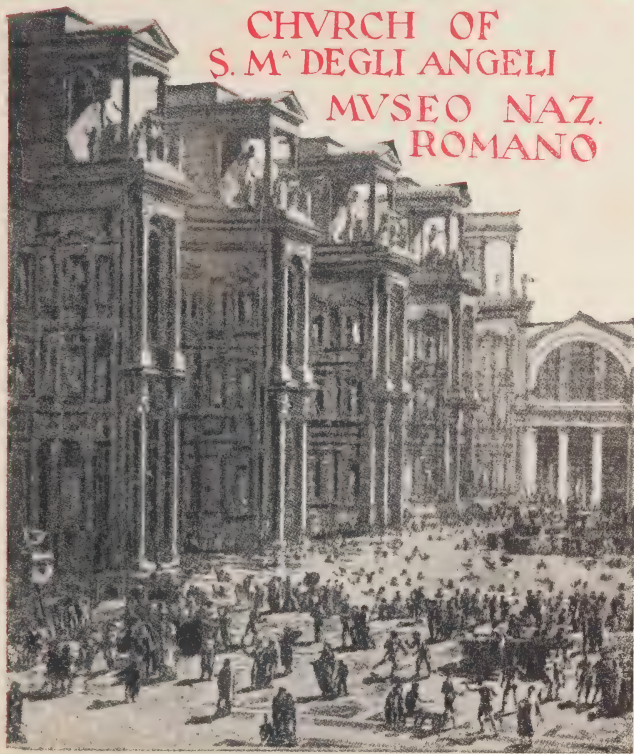
BATHS OF DIOCLETIAN

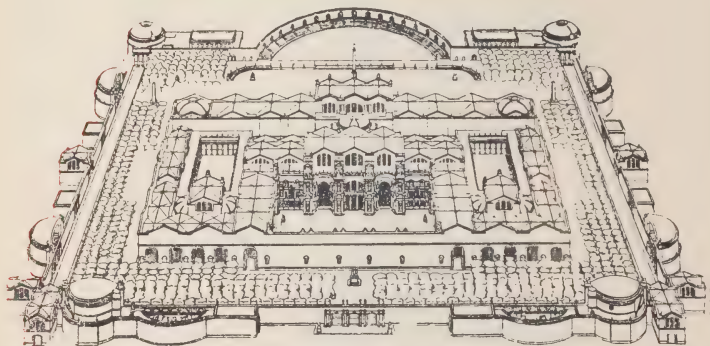
CHVRCH OF S. M^A DEGLI ANGELI

MVSEO NAZ. ROMANO

BATHS OF DIOCLETIAN
CHURCH OF S. M. DEGLI ANGELI
MVSEO NAZ. ROMANO

DIOCLETIAN

Begun in the year 302 of the Christian era by Diocletian and Maximian, and finished by Galerius and Constance Chlore, these baths were 1421 m. in circumference and could hold more than 3200 bathers at a time. They stood in the midst of a vast quadrangular enclosure, the walls of which circled nearly all the ground which now lies between *Via Volturno* to the north-east *Via XX Settembre* (in ancient times Vicus Portae Collinae) to the north-west, *Via Torino,* to the south-west *Via Viminale, Piazza dei Cinquecento*

to the south-east. On the same side, but outside the wall, there was a reservoir where the *Acqua Marcia,* renowned throughout the city for its clearness, was collected; this was the water which supplied the Baths. The remains of the reservoir, called *Botte di Termini,* were destroyed in 1742, and what is left of them is under the ground of the *Piazza dei Cinquecento.*

The main entrance was to the north-east, at about the height

VIA VOLTVRNO

of the present *Via Gaeta.* However, there was a direct approach to the out-houses, situated on the south-west of the wall, by way of two large round halls, one of which, at the western corner is now the Church of. S. Bernard, and the other, to the south, is used to-day as depôt for the garden of the institute of S. Mary of the Angels.

Here stood the Stade (now *Piazza delle Therme)* and the theatre (near *Via Nazionale).*

The baths themselves were situated between the Stade and the north-east wall of the enclosure. As in all similar establishments, there was the *calidarium* for the hot baths, the *sudatorium* for the hot-air baths, the *cella media* or *tepidarium* for the tepid baths and the

gymnastics performed before and after the bath, and finally the *frigidarium* or large pool, a fairly vast stretch of cold water under the open sky, for swimming. The *caldarium*, the *sudatorium* and the *tepidarium* now form part of the Church of S. Mary of the Angels, namely the façade, the first round chapel after the entrance, and the transverse nave. The site of the frigidarium is recognized behind the church, in the place where now are the cloisters of Michelangelo and the National Museum. The engraving hereafter reproduces the per-

ARA PACIS (Restauration)

spective view of the body of the central building, which the eminent architect Edmond Paulin, with a perfect artistic and historical sense, has drawn in his great work on the Baths of Diocletian, and did me honour with a flattering dedication which I preserve as record of the great artist with the truly Roman soul.

Around the central building there were groves and gardens, beyond which, along the wall of the enclosure, opened galleries, exedras, meeting-halls, and refreshment-rooms. There were also, near the principal façade porticoed courtyards reserved for philosophers

who wished to converse undisturbed; the imposing remains of one of them are still to be seen on entering the museum in *Piazza dei Cinquecento.*

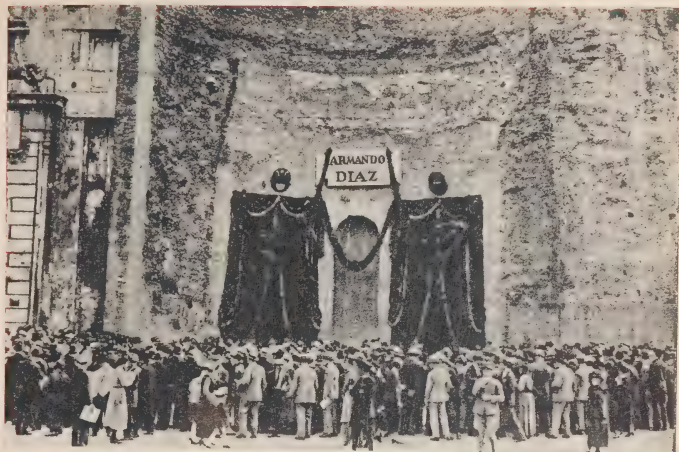
We must also add that scholars could consult here the books of the ancient Nepiena Library, which had been brought here from Trajan's forum by order of Diocletian, and that art-lovers could contemplate a superb collection of pictures arranged in various parts of the baths.

According to legend, 40.000 Christians were employed in the construction of this building; the reigns of Diocletian and Maximian having been conspicuous for cruel persecutions it is, without doubt, true that the Christians, reduced to slavery, were employed in the building of public edifices.

But the baths had only a relatively ephemeral existence. In 409 Alaric entered Rome by the *Porta Salaria* and destroyed them after burning the gardens of Sallustius. Though they were restored at the end of the V century they were hardly frequented as before, and by the middle of the following century they had fallen already into ruin and remained thus in a state of complete abandon, for nearly 1,000 years.

However, these ruins were perhaps spared longer than those of other ancient Roman monuments, for they had been constructed by Christians, who had built in the enclosure a church to S. Ciriac, Sanctus Cyriacus in thermis Diocletiani, who had been one of the Christians employed on the work, and who had suffered martyrdom under Diocletian.

In the XVI century the young Roman patricians transformed the large hall or *tepidarium* into a riding-school, where they devoted themselves to various sports, while the rest of the building became the refuge of assassins and people of bad repute.

Happily, in 1536, the Carthusians decided to give up their at the Church of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem, because of the malaria

The Church of S. M. degli Angeli during the funerals
of H. E. Marshal Diaz, Duke of the Victory.

The interior of the Church of S. M. degli Angeli during the funerals
of H. E. Marshal Diaz, Duke of the Victory.

which was prevalent there, and they obtained from Pius IV permission to settle near the Baths of Diocletian the remains of which they promised to preserve. Towards the same time a Sicilian priest, named Antonio del Luca, received, in spite of the bitter opposition of the young men of the town, authorisation to transform the remains of the large hall of the baths into a church, and Michelangelo was charged with the undertaking. The new Sanctuary received the name of S. Mary of the Angels, and Del Luca placed in it a copy of the picture of the Queen of the Angels which he had seen in the Basilica of S. Mark at Venice; a majestic porch indicated the south-east entrance, on the side facing the present central station. Unfortunately, things were changed in 1750. At that time a restoration of the building having become necessary, the architect Vanvitelli was ordered to move the entrance to face the present *Piazza delle Terme,* where it still remains, and the work of Michelangelo is thus to a great extent impaired. There still remains, however, the magnificent cloister of Michelangelo , which measures 80 meters in width and is supported by 100 travertine columns.

The Sanctuary, the work of the greatest architect who ever lived, is moreover one of the most interesting in Rome for the number of really remarkable works of art which it contains, and for having witnessed, on the 24 October, 1896, the marriage of King Victor Emanuel III. A photograph of this ceremony is shown below.

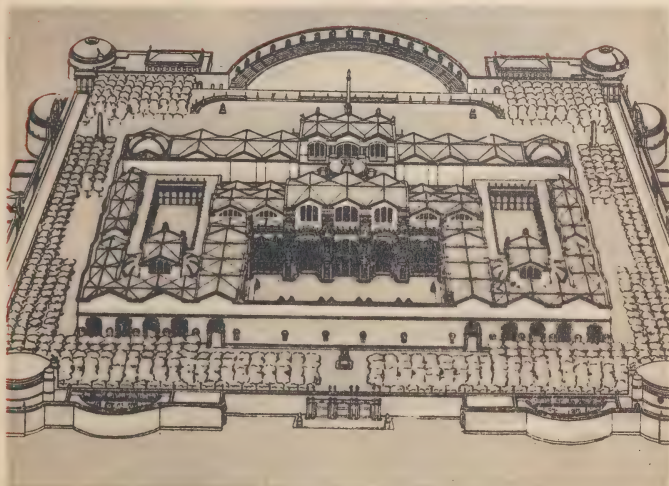
As for the rest of the ruins of the Baths of Diocletian, they are covered in the course of centuries by hideous hovels and dirty shops which have been entirely cleared away. There still remain some imposing buildings which are too vast to be used as museums for small objects of art, though the great plan of the Baths is there to be admired, with the remains of the inscription which records them. There are besides some colossal statues and large fragments of decorations, there are the fragments partly fitted together of the Ara

Pacis Augustae, and there is also an ancient sepulchre found in Trastevere, while near the entrance of the Museum are statues of the vestal virgins and the figure of Augustus in the vestment of Pontifice Maximus. There are also the Acts of the Arvali Brothers, inscriptions of extreme value from the point of view of the history of the ancient Roman religion.

Thus the visitor can admire today in all their majesty the imposing remains which have indeed become worthy of sheltering the precious collections contained in the great national museum, which the illustrions Prof. Paribeni has put together and arranged with a care and ability above all praise.

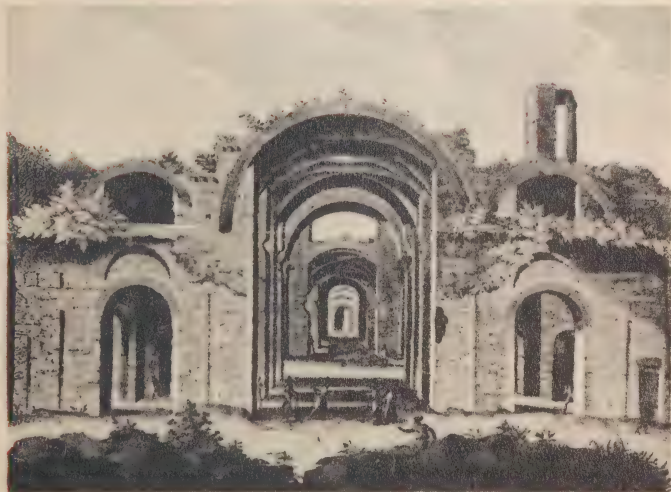
In spite of the magnificence of the ruins of the Baths of Diocletian they cannot now give an exact idea of the actual appearence of establishments of the kind. For a right conception of the Roman Baths, one must visit those of Caracalla which, in their general effect preserve perfectly the arrangements of the different parts of the antique edifice (1).

(1) See interesting book recently published by the same author: “ *The Baths of Caracalla at the Roman Epoch and in our days* „.

Entrance and general view of the Baths (Restored)

Triumph of Diocletian and Maximian

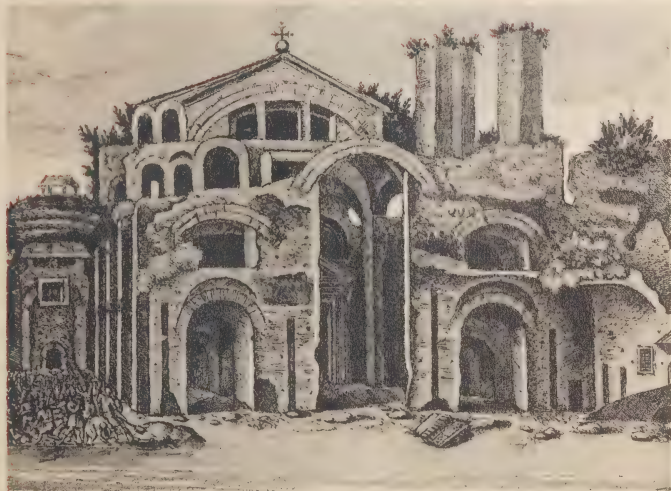
Inauguration of the Baths

Present state and reconstruction of the section of the Baths

Entrance to the Museum and ruins of the Baths

Church of S. Maria degli Angeli, once the central salon of the Baths

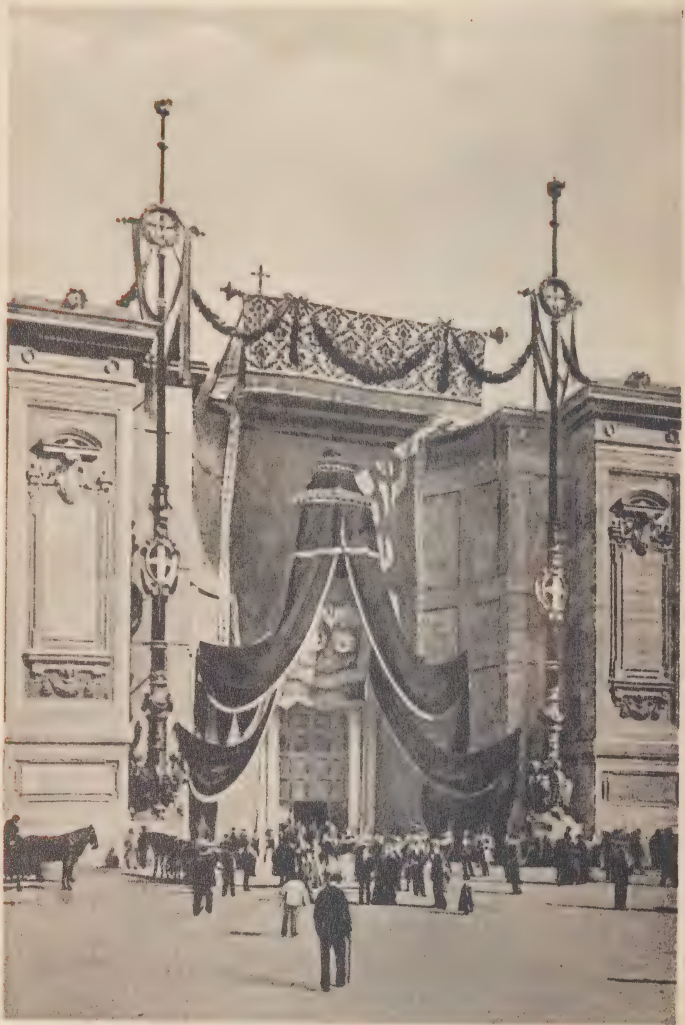
Piazza dell'Esedra, one of the Stadiums of the Baths

Ruins and reconstruction of the Cold Bath (Frigidario)

Ruins of the Baths and the entrance of the Church in 1700

Salons of the Baths with reproductions of ancient monuments

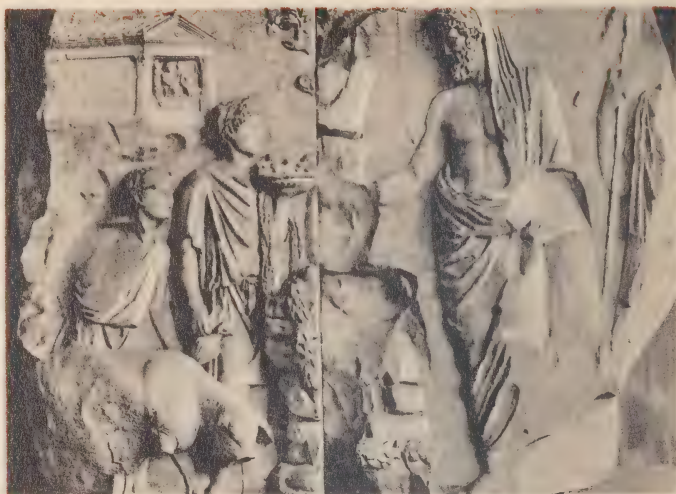
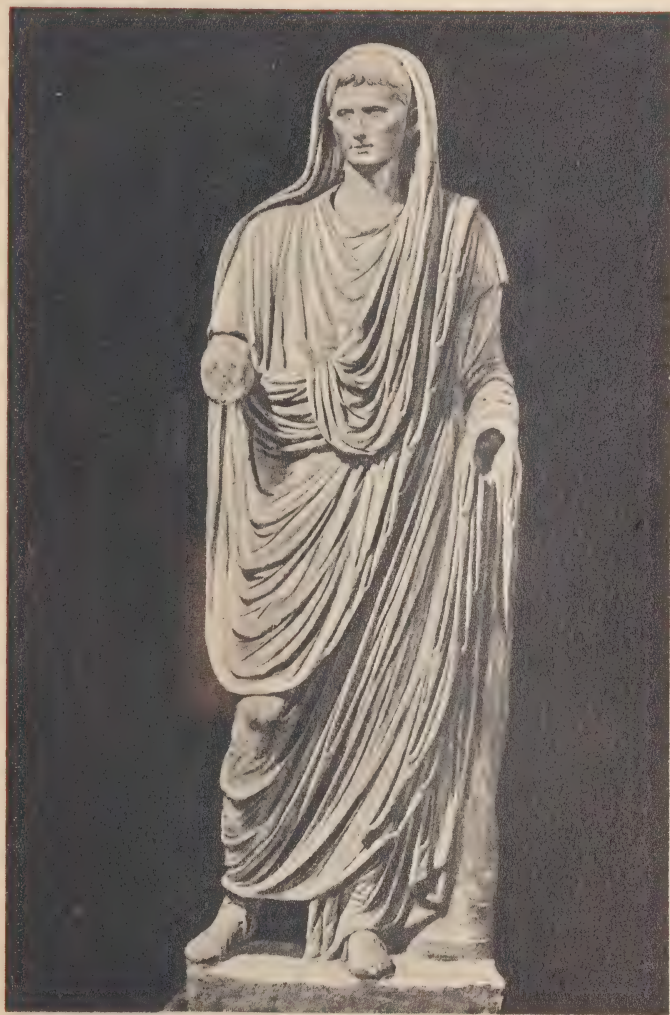
The same Salons seen from the other side

Present Entrance of the Church.

Ancient Painting - S. Maria degli Angeli

Entrance of the Church decorated for the Wedding of King Victor Emanuel III

Exterior and interior of the Church during the nuptial ceremony

The Altar at which the King and Queen were married

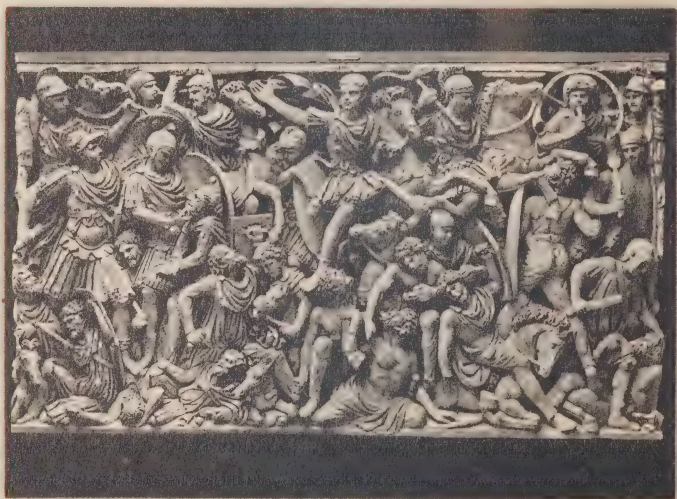
The *Ara* of Ostia with the legend of the fondation of Rome

Fragment of the *Ara Pacis Augustae*

Statue of Augustus found in the Labican

Museum - Portico of the Cloister during the visit of the King of Spain

Cloister of Michelangelo and Garden

Statue of Venus found at Cyrene

The Niobe of the Sallustian Gardens

Birth of Venus and sarcophagus with battle

Salon with the Ludovisi Collection

Lake of Nemi (reconstructed) bronzes of Roman ships

Another Salon with Roman antiquities found in Trastevere

The Gaul who killed his wife

Cupid and Pysche (Ludovisi Collection)

Mars resting (Ludovisi Collection)

Salon of the " Girl of Anzio „

Apollo with the Lyre

STABILIMENTI POLIGRAFICI ALTEROCCA - TERNI - 1928